8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

369 of the Free State, at least, the landlord is gone and the true big farmer is rare. The town's hinterland is the world of the small farmers. And the town lives by its connection with the social order to which the countryman is attached. One need probe only a little way beneath the surface of conventionalities to learn that the connection is much more than the economics of distribution and exchange.

366 347 369 342 In the first place, the shop is also the seat of a familistic identification, very like that of land and farm. Ireland is better supplied with shops, at least in number, than any comparable European nation. A very large proportion of her population lives by retail trade. But one must not think of these shops, so numerous in every Irish town, as great department stores, or as units in a country-wide chain. The former, of course, do exist in cities, and the latter, called multiple-shops, are a new invasion. They have little place as yet in the smaller towns. The typical shop is a less imposing affair. It supports, normally, only the family which works it.

Such a shop is most often a small two-story building. The ground floor is evenly divided between the business premises and the household kitchen. In front, a single step in from the street, a single deep room, whose width is that of the building's front, houses counter, shelves, shop-stock and money-till. The business of a lifetime goes forward in this room. In back, a flagstone-floored kitchen with an open hearth duplicates, on

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

a more elaborate scale perhaps, the country farm house kitchen. Like its country counterpart it is the seat of family life.

Upstairs, a front room facing the street is transformed, by family portraits, an ornamental mantle and a piece or two of good mahogany, into a ceremonial parlour. Behind this, range the bedrooms of the family. Perhaps, in affluence and refinement there is an upstairs sitting-room as well. For the shop is no mere place of business. It is first of all a household, of which one section and one only is devoted to the world of affairs.

The family which this household houses and supports, in the majority of cases, works the shop in much the same way that the family of the farmer works the land. It conducts its business as a united corporation in which all members may take a hand and each have his place. Husband and wife tend the counter together and between them shopkeeping is divided; sons and daughters work as shop-assistants, as long as they remain at home. Only when affluence lifts the shop to importance and dignifies the shopkeeper with the title and station of merchant, expanding his business to wholesaling, is this arrangement greatly modified.

Yet, self-sufficient as this familistic shop-world is, the countryman has many a connection with it. It lives its own quiet life and plies its own trade so different from the farmer's work upon the farm. Town life breeds its own sentiment and weaves its

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

443 527 at Ballycastle, for instance, lasted a full week and though now limited to a single day is still the great event of the year in north Antrim. August and perhaps February were closely associated with the sale of sheep, the May and November fairs with cattle. In the early 19th century the great fair of Ballinasloe in Co. Galway handled as many as 20,000 cattle and 90,000 sheep. "Their whole thought," wrote Knight of the Mayo peasantry about that time, "seems to be going to fairs and selling or exchanging." "A yard of linen or a couple of chickens," says Arthur Young, "will carry an unemployed hand ten miles."

443 366 It is by the fairs and not by the calendar that the countryman dates events. It may be observed that the popularity of fairs, with their emphasis on livestock, illustrates the strength of the pastoral tradition. They have been something of an obstacle to good husbandry because they occur at the changes of the seasons and thus interfere with field work, particularly with harvest. Nowadays most of the fairs are associated with urban settlements, but the name "Fair *Hill*" still clings to the streets where they are held, and many a town has its fair hill just outside. On such sites tents were formerly erected for refreshment, and there are certain old fair grounds now abandoned where you may see the grassy foundations of the huts and the fire holes where the giant cauldrons were boiled. In the ancient aireachts streets of booths were set up for the fair period, so that they might be described as temporary towns. Professor MacNeill has put forward the thesis that these were the "cities" named by Ptolemy in his description of Ireland.

369 361 This brings us to the problem of urban origins. It is perhaps true to say that the fair used to be regarded as the product of the town, but recent research supports the view that the fair precedes the town and was one factor in its rise. Apart from comparative evidence drawn from certain north African communities, for instance, anyone who has watched a small town-on fair day must get the impression that he is looking at something which has been going on throughout the

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

133
361
311

Figure 4. Low Village and Inis Thiar from the castle

ing has obscured in most places the disconformities between strata. Four rift 133
valleys indent the terraces, and the eastern one runs the entire length of the island 311
to the ocean and holds a 90-feet-deep fresh water lake (see Fig. 7). This valley [361]
and two of the other three to the west of it running half the length of the island
form two promontories on the upper terraces of which the other villages are
situated. Indenting only the lower terraces, the fourth rift is a minor one; it forms [172]
the valley in which the axe heads were discovered. Wells are found in each of the
rift valleys where shale strata are bared. The four villages, from west to east, are
Low, High, Castle, and Terrace.

Located in Low Village (see Fig. 4) are two grocery stores, known as 361
"shops," and an old coast guard station, and in High Village are the post office 34
and church; other buildings of importance are the new school on the common
land and the lighthouse at the back of the island. I already have described the
monuments of historical significance so need not consider them further. The older 366 •
of the two shops in Inis Beag is situated at the southwest margin of the common
land, while the other stands close to the rocky shore at the north end of the com-
munity. Simply a large, narrow room on the ground floor of the two-story dwelling 366
of its owner, each shop also serves as a public house, or "pub," where wines, spirits, 276
beer, stout, soft drinks, and tobacco are sold. Benches along wall and counter serve
the customers who linger, and purchases are made across the counter or in a small
enclosed room near the door, called the "snug." The usual occupants of the shop
are men who come to drink, smoke, visit with their neighbors, and sometimes
purchase goods for their families. Women and children when buying provisions [443]
usually enter the snug for privacy and confer with the shopkeeper through an
aperture opening on the counter. At night, the snug allows small groups of men to [521]
discuss matters of a private nature over drinks.

Coast guard personnel first were assigned to Inis Beag shortly after the 000